

# THE ANATOMY OF CONTROVERSIAL HISTORY IN INDONESIA

Tsabit Azinar Ahmad

History Department, Semarang State University, Indonesia

[azinarahmad@mail.unnes.ac.id](mailto:azinarahmad@mail.unnes.ac.id)

## ABSTRACT

The surge in controversial history on Indonesian historiography is worth critical scrutiny. Some of the most turbulent events including *Serangan Umum Satu Maret* (1 March Attack) of 1949, *Gerakan 30 September* (30 September Movement) of 1965, *Surat Perintah Sebelas Maret* (11 March Instruction) of 1966 and Indonesian killings after 1965 had caused immense unease in social-political role of Indonesian armed forces and human rights violations. Within the turmoil, the vast majority of society suffered from growing tension and confusion. For that reason, this paper meticulously analyzes the anatomy of controversial history, defined as several versions of writing, in Indonesia. In this regard, an issue is deemed controversial when personal, communal, and political interest evokes emotional engagement. In historiography, there are two causal factors namely methodological mistake and sociopolitical interest. They result in, furthermore, two main characteristics. The first type is academic controversial history with varied historians' interpretation on the investigated sources. The second type revolves around sociopolitical controversial of which natures are personal, social, cultural and political. It is deeply rooted in conflict of interests associated with individuals or community. Far too often, some of them were the perpetrators or stakeholders who exercise power to legitimate their domination in history. The relationship between knowledge and power can be best illustrated by the publication of the official history and the prohibited alternatives. To my view, such sociopolitical controversies would inevitably ignite debates in wider society.

**Keyword:** controversial history, academic controversy, sociopolitical controversy, Indonesia

## INTRODUCTION

Controversial history methodologically is prevalent today, particularly during the process of drafting historiography. It takes place because its narration is inconceivably finalized (Carr, 1987). Levi-Strauss (1966), furthermore, elaborates that since history is oftentimes biased, it highly likely results in different interpretations. The tendency of such controversy is reinforced by the progress of historical deconstructive thought in line with the post-modernism (Munslow, 2006). The possibility of new facts and interpretations, therefore, will always emerge. If they contradict the existing narration, a controversy will be inevitable. For this reason, a history becomes controversial.

Controversial history is interpreted as a narration for one particular event which has multiple explanations/versions (Ahmad, 2012). Various explanations for one case becomes the root of such controversy (Bracey, et al., 2011). In a wider sense, contrasting argumentations for one historical event develop into the cause of controversial history. In other understanding,

different points of view eventually trigger the tendency for oppositions leading to conflicts of interest.

The existence of controversial history is inevitable in the sense of history as a story (*histoire recite*). In this regard, history is an interpretative study for an event. Consequently, recent interpretations are widely welcomed.

The issue of controversy will become more complicated if the development of historiography has not been well established, like in Indonesia. Here, that tradition has been a recently emerged issue so that its place is not fixed and its format is constantly evolved (Mc Gregor, 2008:72). In this regard, controversial issues become imminent.

In Indonesia, the controversy exists in all periods of history. However, its rapid progress occurs after the reformation in 1998. Since that time, all life aspects here have changed. The controversial history arises because the possible circumstance for society to express their opinions without any force. Reformation has altered the mindset of the vast majority of society to be more dynamic and having wider perspective about their surrounding issues (Bunte & Ufen [eds.], 2009).

The development of controversial history after reformation constructs a new stage in Indonesia's historiography. According to Kuntowijoyo, that part is called as "the third wave" (Adam, 2007a:8-9). The first wave is labeled as the history de-colonialization which was initiated by the first National History Seminar in 1957 in Yogyakarta. The second wave is demonstrated by the utilization of social science in history which was profoundly noticeable during the second National History Seminar in Yogyakarta in 1970. Meanwhile the third wave of historiography in Indonesia is marked by the effort to rectify controversial matters written during the New Order.

Asvi Warman Adam (2007a:9-14) explains the characteristics of the third wave in Indonesia historiography as (1) the writing of "proscribed" history, marked by the emergence of new versions and theories which were hardly initiated in the past, (2) the publishing of critical academic history such as scientific papers which were previously accessed by a limited group, and (3) the publishing of exiled figure profile containing the testimony of people who were regarded as "threats" and "outcasts" in the past. This understanding is in accordance with the view from Curaming (2006) who states that reformation has a significant role in encouraging studies which attempt to question the past version of Indonesian history and examine the previously well-established framework. The emergence of that wave, therefore, has provided the opportunity for controversial history.

The progress of controversial history has been documented in a number of writings and research. Some tendencies can be observed here, viz. *first*, some of the writings contribute to various perspectives on an issue; *second*, the study presents an alternative narration to critically question the long-standing story. The first model is usually employed in neutral themes whose risks are low and not emotive. This study frequently exists in textbooks such as Indonesian National History. There, readers could examine contrasting opinions among experts regarding the origin of primordial man, the influence of India and Islam, the existence of monarchy, etc.

The comparison studies for high risk issues draw more attention after the reformation. Kerstin Beise (2004) conducted a comparative study in a number of references about the involvement of Sukarno in 30 September movement. There is also a book by Robert Cribb (2005) entitled *The Indonesian Killings: Pembantaian PKI di Jawa dan Bali 1965-1966* (The Indonesian Killings: the Massacre of Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in Java and Bali 1965-1966). The book which consists of various perspectives concerning the massacre in 1965-1966 was first published by Monash University and translated into Indonesian in 2000. The other controversial historiography book was edited by Abdullah, Abdurrahman, & Gunawan (2012) entitled *Malam Bencana 1965 Dalam Belitan Krisis Nasional* (1965 Disastrous Night in the Entanglement of

National Crisis). It is divided into two volumes: the first one reviews 1965 event from national perspectives and the second volume explores local conflict views. The book presents various interpretations of 30 September movement.

The second model of this historiography attempts to “counter” the previously long-standing version. Such effort actually has been initiated for ages. BM Diah once criticized the publishing of Indonesian national history containing incorrect facts. Her critics were written simultaneously in *Harian Merdeka* on 18-20 September 1985 and subsequently published in 1987 entitled *Meluruskan Sejarah* (Rectifying the History).

After the reformation, abundant writings have emerged to counter the well-established narration. Most of the published texts were taken from short articles in newspaper, magazines, or journals. Some books which contain counter arguments for history include the work written/edited by Syamdani (2001) entitled *Kontroversi Sejarah di Indonesia* (The Controversies of History in Indonesia). There is also a collection of writings from Slamet Soetrisno (2006) in his book *Kontroversi dan Rekonstruksi Sejarah* (Controversy and Reconstruction of History).

One of the historians who actively advocate rectification of Indonesian history is Asvi Warman Adam. He has written and documented articles with numerous themes. Some of his books are *Suharto: Sisi Gelap Sejarah Indonesia* (Suharto: the Dark Side of Indonesian History) (2004), *Menggugat Historiografi Indonesia* (Countering Indonesian Historiography) (2005), *Seabad Kontroversi Sejarah* (One Decade of Controversial History) (2007), *Pelurusan Sejarah Indonesia* (Rectification of Indonesian History) (2007), *Membongkar Manipulasi Sejarah: Kontroversi Pelaku dan Peristiwa* (Dismantling the Manipulation in History: the Controversy of Perpetrators and Events) (2009), *Orang-Orang di Balik Tragedi* (People Behind a Tragedy) (2009), *Bung Karno Dibunuh Tiga Kali?: Tragedi Bapak Bangsa Tragedi Indonesia* (Bung Karno was Assassinated Three Times?: the Tragedy of the Founding Father, the Tragedy of Indonesia) (2010), and *Menguak Misteri Sejarah* (Revealing the Mystery of History) (2010) (Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia, 2012).

From aforementioned thoughts, there are possibly various versions for one particular event in Indonesian historiography. Therefore, this writing attempts to investigate its anatomy. The unit of analysis employed was controversies in each period of history including prehistoric era, Hindu-Buddha, Islam, national movement and contemporary historical period in Indonesia.

## **SOME CONTROVERSIES IN INDONESIAN HISTORY**

In Indonesia, a number of events are still obscure regarding on how the actual moment really occurred. In all periods, controversial narrations and facts always nearly remain. In prehistoric period, some controversial findings have been noted. Though their tendencies are for the archaeological aspect, they contribute to the journey of Indonesian history. The controversies developed during pre-historic period include (1) historical artifacts; and (2) the human existence, including the development process and origin.

The example of controversies about historical artifacts is the debate about Indonesian position as the lost Atlantis. This issue was introduced in the book entitled *Atlantis the Lost Continent Finally Found* by Arysio Santos (2005). There, he proposed a thesis that the lost Atlantis was located in Indonesian archipelago. Santos' writing seems to support Stephen Oppenheimer's view (1998) in his book *Eden in the East: the Drowned Continent of Southeast Asia* which explains that Southeast Asia was one of the centers of lost civilization. Their work subsequently inspired the expedition in Padang and Sadahurip mountains by primordial catastrophic team who were obsessed with the discovery of ancient pyramids in Indonesia (*Pikiran Rakyat Online*, 2012).

The journey of pre-historic times has been controversial particularly on the human existence. In 2005, the world was staggered by the discovery of *Homo floresiensis*. This controversy was heated because there were only two identified species namely *Homo erectus* and *Homo sapiens* during Pleistocene period. The discovery of hominid fossil whose height was 1 m and brain volume was 380 cm<sup>3</sup> in the same era with *H. erectus* and *H. sapiens* provoked a controversy (Brown, etc. 2005).

Regarding the pre-historic period, the most prominent topic was the discussion of humankind development. The major debate at that time was the argumentation between proponents of evolution theory and religious believers. In Indonesian prehistoric time, *Homo erectus* and *Homo sapiens* were known as the part of human evolution chain. Nevertheless, the religious leaders believe that the first human was Adam.

After prehistoric period, Indonesia entered the traditional monarchy era. This period was divided into Hindu-Buddha monarchy era (IV-XV M century) and Islamic monarchy (XI-XVIII century). There were several controversies during the period of traditional monarchy covering: (1) the entrance and development of foreign influence; (2) the existence of monarchy; (3) the phenomenal events; (4) the historical artifacts; (5) the prominent figures; (6) the interest in historical writing.

The first controversy relates to the entrance and development of Hindu-Buddha and Islam in Indonesia. The second volume of Indonesian national history records that contention. It questions where was the origin of such influence and who was responsible for that proliferation. There have been various hypotheses about the entrance of Indian influence in Indonesia including: (1) knight hypothesis by CC Berg & JL Moens, (2) vaisha hypothesis by NJ Krom, (3) Brahmana hypothesis by Van Leur and (4) the concept of fecundation by FDK Bosch (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto [eds.], 2008a: 27-32).

The entrance and development of Islam in Indonesia is also controversial. The process becomes one of the important events in the journey of Indonesian history. It reaffirms Indonesia as a country with the highest number of Islamic believers (Hefner, 2011). On the other hand, the issue of Islamic process is still perplexing (Ricklefs, 2005: 27). There are various debatable theories linked to the entrance and development of Islam in Indonesia. Indonesian national history volume 3 records some theories regarding the entrance of Islam here viz. (1) Mecca theory supported by Hamka; (2) Persian theory by Husein Djajadiningrat; (3) Gujarat theory by Snouch Hurgronje (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 2008b [eds.]: 161-168). Besides that, theory of China was also developed as written by Slamet Mulyana (2005) and Sumanto Al Qurtuby (2003).

The second category relates to the existence of traditional monarchies in Indonesia. It includes: the location, domination and influence of such monarchies. The example is the debate concerning the central position of Sriwijaya monarchy. There are several views regarding its location such as Palembang, Perak, Malaysia, from Kedah (Malaysia) to Muara Takus, Jambi, Batang Kuantang moved to Mukha Upang, as well as Chaiya (Thailand) (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto) [eds.], 2008a: 65-93).

The other controversy regarding the existence of monarchies is about their domination. It is represented by the debate between FDK Bosch and Poerbatjaraka who wrote the existence of ruling dynasty during Ancient Mataram. Bosch (1952) stated that Mataram was governed by two dynasties, Syailendra and Sanjaya. However, that statement was rebutted by Poerbatjaraka (1958) who argued that there was only one dynasty: Syailendra. Both Bosch and Poerbatjaraka wrote in the same journal namely *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*.

The third controversy during traditional monarchies is phenomenal events. The example during Hindu-Buddha period was battle of bubat. According to Pararaton, it occurred in 1357

between Majapahit and Sunda (Kriswanto, 2009). During this event, an escorting group for a bride was attacked by Majapahit. Consequently the relationship between Majapahit and Sunda was strained in which Hayam Wuruk and Gajah Mada was accused as the perpetrators. The other controversial phenomenon taken place during traditional monarchies was their succession and collapse. Numerous debates have been undertaken to articulate when and how such monarchies collapsed. The example of this case was Demak conflict. In Babad Tanah Jawi, the dispute between Sultan Trenggono offspring and Arya Penangsang (Olthof, 2007) was narrated. There, each of them claimed that they were legitimate.

The fourth controversy during traditional monarchies is the artifacts. During Hindu-Buddha period, there were a number of controversial artifacts such as Mantyasih prasasti (907 M) and Wanua Tengah III (908 M) regarding the authority of Ancient Mataram (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto [eds.], 2008a: 148-169). In both epigraphies, the names of king in Ancient Mataram were stated differently. This case indicates that the controversy had existed during the ancient time. Furthermore, the controversy about artifacts is also found in Panataran Candi. In that place, there is a relief similar to the civilization during pre-colombia period in Latin America.

The artifacts from Islamic period are inextricably linked to controversies. For instance, one's graveyard location may trigger a controversy. For the time being, the graveyard of some figures is claimed in several places such as Kalijaga Sunan in Demak and Cirebon as well as Syeh Jumadil Kubro in Mojokerto and Semarang.

The fifth controversy during traditional monarchy period is about prominent figures. It encompasses their existence and role. One of the controversial figures during Hindu-Buddha period was Ken Angrok. He was regarded as the founder of Rajasa wangsa who became the ancestor of current Javanese kings. One of the controversies about Ken Angrok is his mysterious origin. The example of opinions about the origin of Ken Angrok was stated by Boechari (1975) that Ken Angrok was actually the proscribed child from Tunggal Ametung.

During Islamic monarchy period, there were a number of controversies regarding prominent figures. The example of this case took place in Java. There, the process to become Islamic believers was centered on the role of *Walisongo* (trusted guardians). Related to this matter, Slamet Mulyana (2005) wrote a book entitled *Runtuhnya Kerajaan Hindu Jawa dan Timbulnya Negara-Negara Islam di Nusantara* (The Collapse of Javanese Hindu Monarchies and The Emergence of Islamic States in Archipelago). It was firstly published in 1968 but the distribution was banned by the government in 1970s. The essence of this book was about the reconstruction of Islam origin in Indonesia and wali figures that mostly come from Tionghoa ethnic.

The other controversy in Indonesian Islamic history is about Syeh Siti Jenar (Mulkhan, 1999). He lived during the period of Walisongo in XVI century. The controversy was immensely complex encompassing his existence, origin, teaching and influence. Siti Jenar was regarded as a controversial figure because he proliferated mystical values in Islam deviating from the current understanding.

The sixth controversy in traditional monarchy period is about the historic writing. It covers the utilization of history for political interest. The historiography developed for the time being is traditional with the characteristic of literature review. The historic writing, therefore, is generally aimed as a means of political legitimation. The factual truth in the historiography shall be examined deeper in order to present more rigorous data.

After the traditional monarchy, Indonesia entered the colonial period (XIX century – the first half of XX century) which was continued by the national movement in the first half of XX century. In this study, the controversies in two periods are intentionally incorporated because they occurred at the subsequent time and related to each other. During this period, the controversies

were emphasized on: (1) the process and influence of colonialism; (2) the existence of national movement; (3) the phenomenal events; (4) the prominent figures; (5) the interests in historic writing.

The first case relates to the process and influence of colonialism. For instance, the truth about the duration of colonialism for 350 years is controversial. Until today, the society believes that the Dutch colonialism was carried out for 350 years. However, when Resink (2012) stated that the period was actually shorter, a controversy emerges. In his book entitled *Bukan 350 Tahun Dijajah* (Not Being Colonized for 350 years), Resink analyzes that the period has been exaggerated. To his view, the colonialism politically was commenced in 1800 and at that time some areas were still regarded as independent.

The second controversy is about the existence of national movement. In this case, Adam (2007b) noted that the decision of Budi Utomo establishment as the national awakening day is questionable. This is because BU was an organization upholding local values and in the field of culture. He prefers the role of Sarekat Islam as the organization upholding national value in all sectors.

The third controversy relates to the phenomenal events. For instance, there were policy enactments, oppositions and important moments during national movement. The example of controversial and phenomenal event during this period was Youth Pledge as the important point of Indonesian history. Actually, the term of Youth Pledge was used in 1958; then according to Sartono Kartodirjo, there was another important momentum but it was not as widely known as Youth Pledge. It was Political Manifesto in 1925 which firmly emphasizes the meaning of independence and unity (Adam, 2007b).

The fourth controversy for colonial and national movement period relates to the prominent figures. One of the controversial figures during that time was Kartini. The controversy encompasses her belief and role as a national hero. Pramoedya Ananta Toer believed Kartini was syncretic. In addition, some people regard Kartini as an Islam and others believe she was a Christian. Her heroic contribution was also being questioned. Harsya W. Bachtiar once opposed Kartini's role as the figure of emancipation and national movement (Adam, 2007b).

The fifth controversy is the debate due to conflict of interests in historical writing. During colonial period, a historiography was developed. The main characteristic of colonial historiography is the perspective of *neerlandosentric* which views an event from the perspective of Dutch-Hindia. There was a tendency to see native people as uncivilized and underdeveloped group (De Graaf, 1971).

Entering contemporary period, the controversy becomes more advanced. As a result, there has been plenty of controversial history. During this period (after 1945), the controversy encompasses (1) the process of event occurrence including the cause, chronology and meaning; (2) the impact resulted from an event; (3) the interests in historical writing; (4) the prominent figures; (5) the historical artifacts. During this period, the historical controversy was more specific than the previous time. The attempt to describe the controversy during contemporary period still has an implication up to date. Therefore, efforts have been undertaken to explain the aspects of controversy. Besides that, the sources about such historical events are more various and quantitatively sufficient.

The first and second category of controversy is represented by 30 September Movement (G30S) and Supersemar (*Surat Perintah 11 Maret* = 11<sup>th</sup> March Instruction). Both of them have the complexity regarded as the most controversial historical event up to date. Until now G30S has left mysteries regarding who the intellectual actor was. At least five actors were articulated as the perpetrator behind G30S event: (1) Indonesian Communist Party; (2) the army; (3) Soekarno; (4)

Soeharto; (5) foreign party (in this case, it was United States of America through its CIA) (Beise, 2004: 25-35; Sulisty, 2011:55-66). The G30S and its subsequent impact have been more influential after the emergence of narrations which opposed the existing story and parties who were felt victimized.

From the perspective of impacts, G30S has left traumatic stories up to date. Some of the implications of G30S were massacre of Indonesian Communist Party, the prohibition of communism, Marxism, and Leninism, as well as the marginalization of people who were suspected having involved and related to that party. In terms of massacre, there were more than 500.000 supporters of Indonesian Communist Party who were assassinated (Cribb, 2005). Besides that, the impact which still exists for the time being is the hatred sentiment in the society and a mass trauma because of communist (Ahmad, 2014). Now a number of books have recorded the sentiment impact for communism in the society such as a book edited by Roosa, Ratih & Farid (2004) entitled *Tahun yang Tak Pernah Berakhir: Memahami Pengalaman Korban 65* (The Never Ending Year: Understanding the Experience of 65 Victims). A similar book tells a story of Gerwani life after 1965 written by Susanti (2006) in her book entitled *Kembang-Kembang Genjer* (Genjer Flowers).

The other event as the example of controversies in the first and second category during the contemporary period is Supersemar (*Surat Perintah Sebelas Maret* - 11<sup>th</sup> March Instruction). The controversy of Supersemar emerges because the document as the basis of New Order was mysteriously lost. To date, there are three existing Supersemar documents. Regarding its publication, the developed controversy relates to questions “did Sukarno enact Supersemar without any force?”, “who typed Supersemar?” (Wardaya, 2007:20). Some emerging controversies about its impacts are “how was the actual characteristic of Supersemar, was it technical or political? “Was Supersemar intended as the transfer of authority?” (Wardaya, 2007:112).

Related to the figure controversy, in 2008 Indonesia was staggered by the confession from Andaryoko Wisnuprabu as Supriyadi, a retaliation figure of PETA. Andaryoko claimed himself as Supriyadi and attended important events such as BPUPKI meeting on 29 May – 1 June 1945, became the flag raiser with Latif Hendraningrat during proclamation on 17 August 1945 and gathered in Bogor Palace when three generals namely Basuki Rachmat, M. Yusuf and Amir Machmud met Sukarno in order to create 11<sup>th</sup> March Instruction Letter (Wardaya, 2008: 76-122). The sudden statement from Andaryoko as Supriyadi ignites controversy in the society regarding its truth.

One of the most controversial figures in Indonesian historiography after its independence is Soeharto. The controversy emerges because during his governance, Soeharto successfully proliferates understanding that he was a hero. At that time, his attempt to control history was indicated by the reduction of Sukarno's role and the exaggeration of Soeharto's role. For instance, the nationally distributed textbooks glorified the role of Soeharto in a number of events such as 1 March General Attack and 30 September Movement. There were also some movies like *Serangan Fajar* (the Dawn Attack) which emphasizes the role of Soeharto (Ahmad, 2010). During New Order period, the historical writing placed Soeharto as a central figure. Consequently there was a myth which believes that “Soeharto as a hero”. In its development, many opinions were in favor of Soeharto in economic aspect so that the myth as “the Father of Development” was created.

The third aspect of controversy during contemporary period is the interest in historical writing. The historiography of Indonesiasentris tends to be remote from objectiveness due to the development of decolonization principle which emphasizes ultranationalism and upholds rhetorics. Mc Gregor (2008:73) states that during the central democracy, the history was utilized to advance the uniformity of ideology and the similarity of mission to build the nation. This case

was reflected by the works of the generation of historians in the early period after colonialism such as M. Yamin, Sukanto, and Sanusi Pane (Purwanto, 2001a:32).

The historiography tradition of Indonesiacentrism was criticized because on its actual practice, the past ideology was more emphasized than the reconstruction of truth. As a result, the existence of normative validity in narrative truth could not be supported by empirical validity (Purwanto, 2001a: 33). During the development of scientific culture and historical methodology, that factor ignites controversies.

The aspect of interests in creating controversial history has been demonstrated in the development of Indonesian historiography. Since the first National History Seminar in 1957, the writing of Indonesian history had changed its orientation to Indonesiacentrism. However, that seminar also brought the controversy of views between Moh. Yamin and Soedjatmoko (Nordholt, 2004: 4). In Yamin's perspective, the scientific study should direct the interpretation about nationalism and be utilized to strengthen national awareness. On the other hand, Soedjatmoko had a different view and emphasized the critics on "past utopia" and its values. He tended to support the individual responsibility and stated that nationalism was not the part of scientific study. However, the view from Soedjatmoko was not in line with the context in Indonesia in 1950s when the society was in the process of searching their identity (Nordholt, 2004: 5).

One of the products from the political interest in historiography is a textbook entitled Indonesian National History. There have been plenty of critics for the fourth volume of this book particularly on the contemporary period as what had been undertaken by BM Diah and Asvi Warman Adam. The critics were addressed because in the fourth volume there were a significant number of incorrect facts (Suwignyo, 2014).

History is utilized as a means of legitimation for the sake of unity (Wood, 2005:209). Furthermore, Wood (2005:9) states that some events were utilized by New Order to maintain the integrity and harmony such as the exposure of Majapahit advancement, Islamic Monarchies, the triumph during revolution period and 30 September Movement which was continuously communicated through media like monuments, textbooks, films, televisions, newspapers, novels and various literary works.

The fifth controversy during the contemporary period is about the historical artifacts. In particular, the artifacts during New Order were controversial. This is because many monuments or literatures were intentionally built for the interest of ideology (Mc Gregor, 2008; Wood, 2005). One of the controversial artifacts is the Museum of Pancasila Sakti Monument as the propaganda and means to legitimate ideology for the official version of 30 September Movement.

Table 1 Summary of Types of Controversy in Each Historical Period in Indonesia

| No | Period                 | Types of Controversy  |
|----|------------------------|---|
| 1  | Prehistoric            | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Controversy about historical artifacts;</li> <li>2. Controversy about the existence of humankind, including the debate concerning the development process and origin.</li> </ol>  |
| 2  | Traditional Monarchies | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Controversy about the entrance and development of foreign influence;</li> <li>2. Controversy about the existence of monarchies including their location, domination and influence;</li> <li>3. Controversy about phenomenal events;</li> <li>4. Controversy about historical artifacts;</li> <li>5. Controversy about prominent figures, including their existence and role in the history;</li> <li>6. Controversy about interests in historical writing.</li> </ol> |



|   |                                   |  |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| 3 | Colonialism and National Movement | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Controversy about the process and influence of colonialism;</li> <li>2. Controversy about the existence of movement;</li> <li>3. Controversy about phenomenal events;</li> <li>4. Controversy about prominent figures;</li> <li>5. Controversy about interest in historical writing.</li> </ol>  |
| 4 | Contemporary                      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Controversy about the formation process of an event, encompassing its cause, chronology and meaning;</li> <li>2. Controversy about the impact resulted from an event;</li> <li>3. Controversy about the interests in historical writing;</li> <li>4. Controversy about prominent figures; and</li> <li>5. Controversy about historical artifacts.</li> </ol> |

## THE ANATOMY OF CONTROVERSIAL HISTORY IN INDONESIA

### Subjectivism and Interests in Historiography

The analysis of the anatomy of controversial history is drawn from the identification of its major cause in historiography. Generally, there are two major roots in controversial history namely the methodological issue and the historiography interest. The first issue is from the subjectivity in investigating the history. In the sense of *histoire recité* (recitation of an event), history as a result of historiography is regarded as subjective because it has been interpreted and selected. Its process has involved the principle of historians unlike *histoire réalité* (the actual process of an event) whose characteristic is objective (Poespoprodjo, 1987: 1-2; Soedjatmoko, 1995: 360).

In methodological aspect, the controversy is caused by the limitation of source during the investigation process and the aspect of subjectivism. It is limited because all sources regarding a past event have not been thoroughly explored. The controversy, therefore, will appear if a new source contradicts the older one whereas the society still believe in the old source.

The second methodological aspect which results in controversy is subjectivism. It is different from subjectivity. Subjectivity in an investigation is a point of view whereas subjectivism is a misinterpretation. The subjectivism is interpreted as arbitrariness of historians in selecting, reducing and interpreting the data (Poespoprodjo, 1987). The main question which appears in this aspect is "how is the historical narration written?". In this regard, the finding of new data contradicting the existing information will be highly possible.

The issue of methodology relates to the inability of historiography and methodology to construct and reconstruct past events with low subjectivity. It occurs due to the limited knowledge, mastery and skill of historians who build the tradition of historiography, the writers of history textbooks and history teachers.

Methodologically, historians should be conscientious in the tendency for a biased source particularly on a controversial event whose characteristic is contemporary. Notosusanto (1978) explains that there are several matters which likely cause the past record becomes bias. *Firstly*, different perception exists among one actor and others; *Secondly*, an individual conflict occurs, meaning that one actor opposed others; *Thirdly*, as the actors become older and forgetful, their memory is vague; *Fourth*, pretension exists, which is interpreted as the behavior of actors who prefer to emphasize their own role than others.

The second aspect as the cause of controversial history is sociopolitical. Here, the controversy exists as a consequence of social and political interests for a particular event. The political domination is suspected as one of the factors in controversial history. Bambang Purwanto (2009) labels this phenomena as “politics of historiography”. The major question in this category is “which one is the acceptable historical narration and which one is prohibited.” The dominant power tends to manipulate historical narration according to their own interest.

The issue of political controversy relates to three matters, namely political act as a result of historical event, political interest which follows its interpretation and explanation in composing the historiography. This problem is closely linked to the factor of political and social interests in historiography. Bambang Purwanto (2009:2) furthermore adds that theoretically, history and its lesson become controversial when its writing, composition of curriculum and learning process become an integral part of a political power in a particular regime. This controversy is usually produced and reproduced from an extreme subjectivism of current state politics or the regime that dictates the tradition of scholarly history, curriculum design, learning material and instructional process (Purwanto, 2009: 2).

The interest in history is potentially utilized as a means to legitimate interests, both by majority and minority (Purwanto, 2005: 14). Therefore, there is a propensity from each group to write history in line with their goal and interest. The tendency appeared in Indonesia is each group attempts to glorify and justify their actions through history. Unsurprisingly individual or institutional justification is undertaken.

Besides the factor of power domination, controversial history is also due to one's interest for a historical narration. The interest may come from the involved parties in a historical event or from the parties who would like to take advantage one case for particular purposes. The involved parties or their descendants put their interest because they feel disadvantaged with the historical writing from others. It makes the history sensitive and emotive because the past event is deemed as closely related and important with the current situation in the society (Phillips, 2009).

From the above explanation, controversial history seems to become a narration differently interpreted from one another. It emerges when there is a different methodology in investigating the history and the conflict of interests as the cause of conflicting perception and narration. Some references state that controversial history has the characteristics of emotive and high risk so that the disclosure should be carefully undertaken in the society (Cavet, 2007; Phillips, 2009). As a result, controversial history can be reinterpreted as the conflict between the possessed/formed historical knowledge with the new/different historical facts which are not in line with the existing knowledge in the society.

### **Academic and Socio-Political Controversy**

From its attribute, controversial history can be categorized into two major characteristics namely academical and sociopolitical controversy (Ahmad, 2012). The first type covers the diverse interpretations of historians for a historical source. This is due to the methodological differences in historiography. The debate in this category mostly occurs among historians though the impacts are sometimes widely plagued. In particular, the society do not have direct involvement and interest in that issue.

The academic controversy is due to the disclosure of some new facts in historical writing. The contradiction between new and old facts may occur because the society have not had full understanding towards an event which was initially unknown. The tendency for a controversy

exists when there is a cultural shock due to a new matter. In this regard, the society know what have been previously unknown (Ahmad, 2010).

The academic controversy occurs in the period which is far from the present, such as prehistoric, classic or middle period of Indonesian history. The examples of this type are the controversy about Atlantic, the theory of India and Islam influence and the different interpretation among historians regarding the past events. In other words, the debate in academic controversy encompasses the finding of new facts and the old ones.

The second category of controversial history characteristics is sociopolitical. Here, Ahmad (2012) explains that personal/communal, social, cultural and political interests exist in history. The controversy is deemed as the culmination and consequence of conflict of interests. It happens due to an assumption that the past events still relate to the current interests. Regarding this controversy, there are some categories of contention in Indonesian history.

They are: (1) between known and unknown matters, (2) between empirical and normative matters, (3) between fact and myth or human-made story, (4) between the accepted history/grand narration and an alternative history and (5) between the meritorious and notorious figures. The first and fourth debates relate to the issue of event, whereas the fifth debate relates to the position and role of figures in the history.

The first contention is about the "known facts" and "hidden/closed facts". The example of hidden issue is the historiography of Tionghoa ethnic. For more than four decades, the writing of Tionghoa ethnic in the context of national history faces obstacles. Politically, the issue emerges due to oppressive attempts for this group by the governing power. After the reformation, a number of writings appear to expose the role of Tionghoa ethnic in Indonesian history such as the writing from Slamet Mulyana (2005) about the role of Tionghoa in Islam proliferation; it was previously banned from its publication in 1970s. The fact about the role of Tionghoa ethnic has been hidden thus when it appeared, there were a significant number of oppositions.

The second contention relates to the empirical and normative matters. The empirical history presents its substance with academic feature whereas the normative history presents its substance according to the measurement of value and meaning in line with the normative objective (Suryo, 1991). A normative perspective is usually an event intended for value education which works through the system of belief. It can be the value of culture and religion. The moral messages or particular teachings become the central point of normative event. This issue is problematic when the values are opposed by empirical findings.

There is a tendency for debate when an event is merely intended for the value internalization for the society regardless the empirical discoveries. When normative issue is linked to particular cultural value, a controversy tends to emerge. This happens when the historical writing with scientific methodology in the society still becomes ahistorical aspect. Therefore, the controversy will be inevitable when the writing is not line with the values believed by the society. Normative and empirical issues occur when the historical writing contains particular interests for normative objectives.

The example of normative and empirical debate is about the existence of human during prehistoric time. Questions have been asked to examine whether Adam was the first human, how Adam was viewed from historical perspective and theory of evolution. The questions will remain unsolved because the comparison between normative matters supported by the system of faith and the empirical findings. The attempt to oppose normative issues with empirical findings will become the discussion in the philosophy of knowledge since the debate is about the truth of religion and science. Therefore, when such debate occurs, the controversial history tends to emerge.

The third contention is the opposition between reality and myth. What is meant by myth in this writing is all made-up stories which are intentionally created and not supported by robust primary sources. In his writing, Bambang Purwanto (2001b) provides an illustration about the issue of myth and reality occurs in Indonesian history. The problem subsequently narrows down on the historical controversy. The history which places the foundation of ideological aspects becomes the means to create myths (Purwanto, 2001b: 116). The myth referred in this writing is a political myth, intentionally created for a tool of legitimation and differentiated from the myth through folklore. Consequently, historiography is trapped in the creation of new myth or reinterpretation of older myth to strengthen the new one. The example of this myth was the position of Soeharto as the "hero" and despotic "Father of Development".

The fourth contention relates to the issue between the emergence of official history and the alternative one. From the alternative sense, history is interpreted as the writing from different perspectives through data analysis from numerous sources. For instance, the writings from the perspective of victims who oppose the official version. From the aspect of context, the opposition in controversial history is due to the circumstance during the transition from the authoritarian regime to democracy supported by the independence of press. In that condition, critics were addressed for the monopoly of truth possessed by the ruling authority (Adam, 2009: 1).

The fifth contention relates to the issue of position and role of figures in an event. This is about who was meritorious and notorious. One figure is sometimes assessed from various perspectives, regarded as hero and villain. The prominent figures in history frequently trigger controversy. In the traditional historiography, as the role of figures becomes the major fuel, their existence is regarded as the key in the controversy of an event. Since the period of traditional monarchies to the contemporary era, there have been plenty of controversial figures.

The categories explained above have not become a final opinion. This is because the historic study is constantly developed in accordance with the spirit in a particular era. However, one thing should be noted here is that the analysis about controversial history is basically beneficial as the attempts to comprehensively present the past and support democratic climate. The study for controversial history, therefore, shall be continuously carried out.

## **CONCLUSION**

Controversial history emerges in each stage of developments of Indonesian history. This is due to the issue of methodology and conflict of interests in its writing. From both factors, the classification is subsequently divided into academic and sociopolitical controversies. The academic controversy tends to include scholarly issues whereas the sociopolitical issue emphasizes the emotive relation of past events with the present society. In the sociopolitical perspective, the controversial history can be constructed in terms of the contention (1) between the known and unknown/hidden issues, (2) between empirical and normative matters, (3) between facts and myths or made-up narrations, (4) between the accepted history/grand nation and the alternative history, and (5) between the meritorious and notorious figures.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdullah, T., S. Abdurrahman, & R. Gunawan. 2012. *Malam Bencana 1965 Dalam Belitan Krisis Nasional*. (1965 Disastrous Night in the Entanglement of National Crisis). Vol I and II. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia
- Adam, A.W. 2007 a. *Seabad Kontroversi Sejarah*. (One Decade of Controversial History). Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak.
- , 2007 b. *Pelurusan Sejarah Indonesia*. (Rectification of Indonesian History). Revised Edition. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak.
- , 2009. "Kontroversi: Proses dan Implikasi bagi Pengajaran Sejarah" (Controversy: Its Process and implication for Learning History). *Paper*. Presented in Seminar of Controversial History Learning, Its Problems and Solutions. History Education Program, PPs UNS. Surakarta, May 29, 2009.
- Ahmad, T.A. 2010. "Implementasi Critical Pedagogy dalam Pembelajaran Sejarah Kontroversial pada Sekolah Menengah Atas Negeri di Kota Semarang". (The Implementations of Critical Pedagogy among Controversial History Learning in High School of Semarang). *Master Thesis*. Surakarta: History Education Program, Graduate Program, Sebelas Maret University.
- , 2012. "Engaging Controversial Issues in History Class through Critical Pedagogy". *Paper*. Presented in International Conference in Current Issues on Education. Yogyakarta, September 15-16, 2012.
- , 2014. "Komunisme dan Trauma Massa dalam Perspektif Sejarah" (Communism and Mass Traumatism in Historical Context). *Paper*. Presented at Seminar entitled 'Mengokohkan Ideologi Pancasila: Diskursus Komunisme di Indonesia', Surakarta, February 27, 2014.
- Al Qurtuby, S. 2003. *Arus Cina-Islam-Jawa; Bongkar Sejarah Atas Peranan Tionghoa Dalam Penyebaran Agama Islam Di Nusantara Abad XV&XVI*. (The flow Chinese-Javanese-Islamic; On the Role of Chinese History in Spreading Islam in the archipelago in XV&XVI century) Yogyakarta: INSPEAL & INTI
- Beise, Kerstin. 2004. *Apakah Soekarno Terlibat Peristiwa G 30 S*. (Was Soekarno Involved in G 30 S?). Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak.
- Boechari. 1975. "Ken Angrok Bastard Son of Tunggu Ametung?". *Indonesian Journal of Cultural Studies*, 6 (1), p. 169-174.
- Bracey, P. et.al. 2011. "Teaching Diversity in the History classroom. In Davies, Ian (ed). *Debates in History Teaching*. London & New York: Routledge. pp. 172-185.
- Brown, P. et.al. 2005. "A new small-bodied hominin from the Late Pleistocene of Flores, Indonesia". *Nature* (431). pp. 1055-1061
- Bunte, M & A. Ufen (eds.). 2009. *Democratization in Post-Suharto Indonesia*. London: Routledge.
- Carr, E.H. 1987. *What is History*. New York. Alfred A Knoff.
- Cavet, A. 2007. *Teaching "controversial issues": a living, vital link between school and society?*. In [http://www.inrp.fr/vst/LettreVST/english/27-may-2007\\_en.php?onglet=integrale](http://www.inrp.fr/vst/LettreVST/english/27-may-2007_en.php?onglet=integrale). Downloaded at February 23, 2010.
- Cribb, R. (ed). 2005. *The Indonesian Killings: Pembantaian PKI di Jawa dan Bali 1965-1966 (The Indonesian Killing of 1965.: Studies from Java and Bali)*. Translation. Yogyakarta: Syarikat.
- Curaming, R. 2006. *Toward Reinventing Indonesian Nasionalist Histriography*. Dalam [http://kyotoreview.cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp/issue/issue2/article\\_245.html](http://kyotoreview.cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp/issue/issue2/article_245.html) (Downloaded at December 17, 2006)
- De Graaf, H.J. 1971. *Historiografi Hindia Belanda*. (East Indies Historiography). Translated by C.P.F. Luhulima. Jakarta: Bhratara.

- Diah, B.M. 1987. *Meluruskan Sejarah: Kumpulan Karangan*. (Rectifying the History: an Anthology). Jakarta: Pustaka Merdeka.
- F.D.K. Bosch. 1952. "Crivijaya, de Cailendra- en de Sañjaya-vamca". *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 108 (1), pp 113-123
- Hefner, R. 2011. *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*. Princenton: Princenton University Press.
- Kriswanto, A. 2009. *Pararaton: Alih Aksara dan Terjemahan*. (Pararaton: Interpreting and Translation Script) Jakarta: Wedatama Widya Sastra
- Levi-Strauss, C. 1966. *The Savage Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Mc Gregor, K. 2008. *Ketika Sejarah Berseragam: Membongkar Ideologi Militer dalam Menyusun Sejarah Indonesia*. (History in Uniform: Military Ideology and the Construction of Indonesia's Past). Yogyakarta: Syarikat.
- Mulkhan, A.M. 1999. *Syekh Siti Jenar: Pergumulan Islam-Jawa*. (Syekh Siti Jenar: The Struggle Islam-Java) Yogyakarta: Bentang Budaya.
- Mulyana, S. 2005. *Runtuhnya Kerajaan Hindu Jawa dan Timbulnya Negara-Negara Islam Di Nusantara*. The Collapse of Javanese Hindu Monarchies and The Emergence of Islamic States in Indonesia) Yogyakarta: LKiS
- Munslow, A. 2006. *Deconstructing History*. New York: Routledge.
- Nordholt, H.S. 2004. *De-colonising Indonesian Historiography*. Sweden: Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies, Lund University.
- Notosusanto, N. 1978. *Masalah Penelitian Sejarah Kontemporer (Suatu Pengalaman)*. (Problems of Contemporary History Research (An Experience). Jakarta: Yayasan Idayu.
- Olthof, W.L. 2007. *Babad tanah Jawi mulai dari Nabi Adam sampai tahun 1647*. (Babad Tanah Jawi Since Adam until 1647). Translated by H. R. Sumarsono. Yogyakarta: Narasi.
- Oppenheimer, S. 1998. *Eden in the East: The Drowned Continent of Southeast Asia*. London: Phoenix.
- Phillips, I. 2009. "Teaching Sensitive and Controversial History". In S. Aktekin *et.al.* (ed). *Teaching History and Social Studies for Multicultural Europe*. Ankara: Harf Eğitim Yayıncılığı. pp. 117-126.
- Pikiran Rakyat Online*. 2012. "Dugaan Piramida di Gunung Padang Mendekati Kenyataan". (Alleged Pyramid Mountain Padang Closer to Reality). In <http://www.pikiran-rakyat.com/node/176258> (Downloaded at April 7, 2014).
- Poerbatjaraka, R. 1958. "Crivijaya, de Cailendra- en de Sanjayavamca". *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 114 (3), pp. 254-264
- Poespoprodjo, W. 1987. *Subjektivitas dalam Historiografi, Suatu Analisis Kritis Validitas Metode Subjektivo-Objektif dalam Ilmu Sejarah*. (Subjectivism in Historiography, a Critical Analyze of Validity of Subjective-objective method in History). Bandung: Remadja Karya.
- Poesponegoro, M.D. & N. Notosusanto (ed). 2008 a. *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia Jilid II*. (National History of Indonesia Vol. II). Jakarta: Balai Pustaka
- . 2008 b. *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia Jilid III*. (National History of Indonesia Vol. III). Jakarta: Balai Pustaka
- Purwanto, B. 2001a. "Historisisme dan Kesadaran Dekonstruktif: Kajian Kritis terhadap Historiografi Indonesiasentris". (Historicism and Deconstructive Awareness: a Critical Studies of Indonesiacentrism Historiography). *Humaniora*. Volume XIII, No. 1/2001. Hlm. 29-44.
- . 2001b. "Reality and Myth in Contemporary Indonesian History". *Humaniora*. Volume XIII, No. 2/2001. Hlm. 111-123.

- . 2005. "Sejarawan Akademik dan Disorientasi Historiografi: Sebuah Otokritik" (Academic Historians and Disorientation of Historiography: auto criticism). ". Dalam Asvi Warman Adam dan Bambang Purwanto. 2005. *Menggugat Historiografi Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak.
- . 2009. "Sejarah, Kurikulum, dan Pembelajaran Kontroversial: Sebuah Catatan Diskusi". (History, Curriculum, and Controversial History Learning: A Discussion Note). *Paper*. Presented in Seminar of Controversial History Learning, Its Problems and Solutions. History Education Program, PPs UNS. Surakarta, May 29, 2009.
- Resink, G.J. 2012. *Bukan 350 Tahun Dijajah*. (Not Being Colonized for 350 years). Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu.
- Ricklefs, M.C. 2005. *Sejarah Indonesia Modern 1200-2004*. (Modern Indonesia History 1200-2004). Translation. Jakarta: Serambi.
- Roosa, J., A. Ratih, & H. Farid .2004. *Tahun yang Tak Pernah Berakhir: Memahami Pengalaman Korban 65*. (Year That Never Ended: Understanding the Experience of Victim 65). Jakarta: ELSAM, Tim Relawan untuk Kemanusiaan, & ISSI.
- Santos, A. 2005. *Atlantis the Lost Continent Finally Found*. Brazil: Atlantis Publication.
- Soedjatmoko. 1995. "Sejarawan Indonesia dan Zamannya". Dalam Soedjatmoko dkk. (ed). 1995. *Historiografi Indonesia sebuah Pengantar*. Terjemahan. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Soetrisno, S. 2006. *Kontroversi dan Rekonstruksi Sejarah*. (Controversy and Reconstruction of History). Revised Edition. Yogyakarta: Media Presindo Press.
- Sulistyo, H. 2011. *Palu Arit di Ladang Tebu: Sejarah Pembantaian massal yang Terlupakan (Jombang-Kediri 1965-1966)*. (The Forgotten Years: The Missing History of Indonesia's Mass Slaughter [Jombang-Kediri 1965-1966]). Jakarta: Pensil-324.
- Suryo, D. 1991. "Pengembangan Kajian Sejarah dalam Kurikulum SLTA". (The Development of Historical Studies in High School Curriculum). *Paper*. Presented at Seminar of Dies Natalis IKIP Semarang, March 13, 1991.
- Susanti, F.R. 2007. *Kembang-Kembang Genjer*. Yogyakarta: Jejak.
- Suwignyo, A. 2014. "Indonesian National HistoryTextbooks after the New Order: What's New under the Sun?" *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 170, p 113–131
- Syamdani (ed). 2001. *Kontroversi Sejarah di Indonesia*. (Historical Controversy in Indonesia). Jakarta: Grasindo.
- Wardaya, B.T. 2007. *Membongkar Supersemar! Dari CIA sampai Kudeta Merangkak Melawan Bung Karno*. (Dismantling Supersemar! Crawling from the CIA to the coup against Sukarno.) Yogyakarta: Penerbit Galangpress.
- . 2008. *Mencari Supriyadi: Kesaksian Pembantu Utama Bung Karno*. (Looking Supriyadi: Testimony Bung Karno Main Maid). Yogyakarta: Galang Press.
- Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia*. 2012. "Asvi Warman Adam" in [http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asvi\\_Warman\\_Adam](http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asvi_Warman_Adam) (downloaded at 1 April 2014).
- Wood, M. 2005. *Official History in Modern Indonesia: New Order Perceptions and Counterinterviews* . Leiden & Boston: Brill.